

Distinguished members of the Health Appropriations Subcommittee:

My name is Rise Siegel; I live in Orange. I am a supporter of Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

I am testifying in support of the \$2.5 million included in the Governor's budget on Line T1449 for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence intervention grants in FY2024, and the \$400,000 on Line 274 for operational expenses each year.

But given the magnitude of the crisis of gun violence, especially in Connecticut's urban centers, I believe the grant appropriation needs to be larger, at \$10 million in each year of the fiscal 2024-25 budget. Connecticut is in the position this year to expand what has been requested in that there is an expected surplus of 3 billion dollars.

Gun violence impacts all of us in Connecticut whether directly or indirectly. My young grandchildren have described being sent to another school because of an active shooter in the neighborhood of their school, of knowing that they should stand on the toilet in the bathroom stall so that no one will know they are there as common place experiences and knowledge. This is knowledge no one wants their children and grandchildren to have, especially to have direct knowledge or experience of people shooting and being shot.

The amount of gun violence in Connecticut has continued to climb with the number of shootings in 2022 nearly doubling what occurred in 2018. The vast majority of these shootings occur in Black and Hispanic communities. I was shocked to read that 56% of people shot in Connecticut were Black. And, most of these shootings are in our largest cities. The communities are tremendously impacted by the violence in so many ways. Children, especially, may have their lives and their futures changed by seeing or knowing of gun violence or having someone

they know injured or killed. They may experience mental illness, become involved in substance abuse, develop chronic health problems and have an increased likelihood of being involved in crime themselves.

This is a public health crisis and should be addressed as such. Funding programs in these hard hit communities is key to prevention of gun violence. It has been shown in other states that mentoring, education, job training and therapy have helped to stem gun violence.

Direct communication with those who are most likely to shoot or be shot has been demonstrated to be the best way to break the cycle of gun violence in neighborhoods.

The first steps have been taken in Connecticut by strengthening gun laws. I urge you to follow up by helping communities develop and support programs to fight this loss of human life and drain of government resources by supporting this bill and increasing the funds to implement it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Rise Siegel

Orange, CT